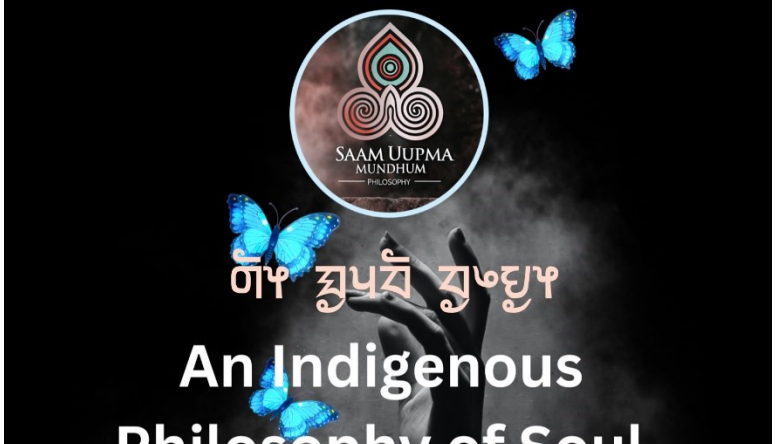
SĀM-ŪPMĀ MUNDHUM



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An Indigenous Philosophy of Soul, Healing, and Decolonial Thought

Dr. Nawa Raj Subba

Sām-Ūpmā Mundhum:

An Indigenous Philosophy of Soul, Healing, and Decolonizing Thought.

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Dr. Nawa Raj Subba

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Implimenting Ideas...

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Sām-Ūpmā Mundhum: An Indigenous Philosophy of Soul, Healing, and Decolonizing Thought.
Author: **Dr. Nawa Raj Subba**

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Preface

When we journey into the depths of human history, we find that stories of pain, forgetting, and the loss of the soul are not confined to one community—they are part of the shared experience of all human civilizations. However, the ways in which these experiences are understood, and the methods developed to overcome them, vary across cultures. Among the Kirat Limbu people of Nepal, such understanding has given rise to a profound, living, and indigenous path—the **Sām-Ūpmā Mundhum**.

Based on the spiritual and cultural traditions of Nepal's Kirat Limbu people, this book presents the Sām-Ūpmā Mundhum Philosophy—an indigenous framework for knowledge and healing. Emphasizing the connectivity of the soul (sām), the ritual of soul-calling (Ūpmā), and oral knowledge (mundhum), the system is philosophical, experiential, and holistic. Derived from centuries of lived experiences, ceremonies, chants and the intergenerational transfers, this philosophy is not merely a cultural narrative. It is an entire model of living, consciousness, suffering and healing.

The inspiration for this work comes from a strong will to preserve, express, and transmit a unique perspective generally lacking in scholarly publications and global mental health debates. Working in disciplines like public health, mental health, culture, and literature, writer found a clear gap between therapeutic approaches and the spiritual and psychological reality of indigenous people. Western psychiatry struggles to adequately explain or treat cultural types of grief,

such as what the Kirat refer to as soul-loss. The vision for this ideology started to surface in that silence.

The Sām-Ūpmā Mundhum Philosophy holds that people comprise three linked components: the body, soul, and relational world. Psychological and spiritual imbalance can follow from losing one's soul (sām) via trauma, anxiety, spiritual crisis, or social isolation. Healing calls for a ritual and relational reconnection with oneself, the soul, the community, and the universe, not only medicine or talk therapy. Ūpmā, a ceremonial process calling the soul back, helps one to do this. These ceremonies are spiritual healing technologies rooted in cosmology and living philosophy, not merely cultural norms.

This worldview revolves mostly on Mundhum, or oral information. Through chants, myths, stories, and ceremonial tales, Mundhum maintains and distributes ancient wisdom. It is a storehouse of therapeutic techniques, ethical lessons, and cultural memory. This book offers mundhum as an epistemological framework that questions accepted paradigms of scientific and philosophical knowledge, therefore transcending mere practice. This book seeks to introduce the Sām-Ūpmā perspective in an academic context, reflecting its indigenous roots and still being reachable for readers all around. Beginning with the Kirat people's historical and cultural background, the book focuses on the Limbu community and shows how mundhum functions as a philosophical, healing, and cultural guide.

The chapters center on the symbolic and therapeutic functions of Sām, Ūpmā, and Mundhum, as well as how they help to provide a whole picture of personality and well-being.

The dialogue between body and soul, a fundamental aspect of Kirat philosophy, often goes unnoticed in contemporary psychology. In this regard, the body is more than just a means of expression for the soul; it is also a communication partner, and suffering usually points to spiritual imbalance.

This book offers a relative analysis of Sām-Ūpmā ideas with contemporary psychological models. Case studies reveal parallels between clinical illnesses, including dissociative disorders, trauma reactions, and grief and soul-loss experiences. These parallels offer a decolonial perspective on healing and interpretation rather than trying to include indigenous knowledge into Western categories.

This book also offers a therapeutic strategy grounded in Sām-Ūpmā ideas. This method consists of a culturally grounded diagnostic process, ceremonial healing, narrative reconstruction, and community participation. Emphasizing restoring balance rather than treating symptoms, the method is holistic, interactive, and non-invasive. Emphasizing social ethics, environmental consciousness, and spiritual integration, it questions the biological model.

Finally, writer offers a general synthesis of the philosophy. The Sām-Ūpmā Mundhum philosophy offers a meaningful voice amid a period of global mental health crises, spiritual alienation, and cultural fragmentation and helps preserve indigenous epistemology. From an indigenous standpoint, it offers the purpose of life, completion, and caring. It holds that rather than simply in empirical data or abstract thought, truth can be found in relationships, stories, rites, and experiences.

Writing this book has been an academic, spiritual, and very personal experience. It is a case study of intellectual decolonization, philosophical invention, and cultural preservation. Not only will the Limbu community gain from this effort, but also academics, clinicians, and seekers searching for more complete, meaningful, and relational approaches to health and well-being.

This book is for the elders, healers, storytellers, and ancestors preserving the Mundhum legacy. The researcher is grateful for the teachers, communities, and readers continuing to listen to the quiet knowledge of the soul relevant to the developing field of decolonial, culturally grounded approaches to mental health.

This work is not only a tribute to ancestral knowledge and cultural resilience but also an invitation to scholars, therapists, and thinkers around the world to engage with a philosophy that is both ancient and urgently relevant. It is a call to listen—not just to clinical voices, but to the ancestral whispers carried through ritual, story, and the human longing for wholeness.

Author's Note

This work is the junction of my professional path, cultural reflection, and personal search. Years of working in the domains of public health, literature, culture, and anthropology have helped me really see the complex relationship between the soul, mental health, and culture. I learnt to see that human suffering is often a rupture in existence, beliefs, and connections rather than a physiological one. With this insight, my view of the Sām-Ūpmā Mundhum Philosophy surfaced.

Within the Kirat Limbu group, where I have found lifetime affinity, the Mundhum custom is not only a collection of old legends but also a deep philosophical system. Still, I have noticed that this idea is under-represented in scholarly, clinical, and worldwide discussions. This insight motivated me to record and present this perspective in the framework of a disciplined philosophical work.

Deeply impacting human life, not just culturally but also therapeutically, the fundamental ideas—Sām (soul), Ūpmā (the ritual of soul-calling), and Mundhum (oral knowledge)—influence each other. Through field contacts, personal experience, spiritual encounters, and scholarly research, I have confirmed these ideas.

Writing this book, I have tried to combine my thoughts, the wisdom of Kirat community elders, insights from attending traditional ceremonies, and critical knowledge from contemporary psychology, culture, and anthropology. The Sām-Ūpmā Mundhum itself is multidimensional,

intergenerational, and comprehensive in character; hence, I would rather not restrict myself inside the lines of any one academic field.

This approach, in my opinion, can greatly help alternative therapeutic models grow, question colonial mental health norms, and promote cultural self-awareness. It is not just the pride of the Kirat Limbu people, but a shared human wisdom.

As I worked on the book, I came to see that Western biomedical models frequently struggle to understand the language of the soul. Actually, soul-loss is a common experience in our society that calls for interpretation through our stories, myths, legends, and ceremonies. For this reason, this book includes cultural, emotional, and scholarly discussions.

With this book, hopefully, readers will be moved to see the healing power of their cultures and to pay attention to the dialogues inside themselves.

I dedicate this work to all the traditional knowledge bearers of the Kirat Limbu community—my teachers, friends, readers, and all other fellow travellers on the road to human consciousness.

Dr. Nawa Raj Subba
Author

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Chapter 1: Introduction

—To Sām-Ūpmā Mundhum philosophy

1.1 Kirat-Indigenous Soul, Knowledge

The Sām-Ūpmā Mundhum Philosophy is an indigenous philosophical framework of the Kirat Limbu people of eastern Nepal that is rooted in their vibrant oral traditions and lived experience. It is Kirat Limbu's indigenous knowledge on soul and Mental Harmony Philosophy. In this aspect, three interrelated concepts imply Sām (the soul), Ūpmā (the ritual [act of invoking the soul]), and Mundhum (oral tradition and philosophy). Collectively, they provide a culturally grounded view of health, personhood, and healing that shifts dramatically from dominant paradigms of biology and Western psychology (Chemjong, 2003; Sagant, 1996).

This concept sees psychological and emotional pain as a result of a soul loss or a failure to connect with one's inner being. Ūpmā is a social-spiritual ritual that unifies a lost soul and brings harmony. This chapter seeks to ground the Sām-Ūpmā philosophy in broader discourses on mental health, indigenous epistemologies, and decolonial thought and provide a scientific, ordered account of it (Smith, 2012; Kovach, 2009).

1.2 Fundamental Ideas

1.2.1 Sām, or Soul

The sām is the soul, or animating power, that defines an individual's metaphysical identity. In Limbu ontology, well-being is defined by the integrity and existence of the sām. If

the soul moves, the person may suffer emotional, psychological, or physical sickness (Gone, 2013). Sām blends emotional and spiritual life as opposed to the dichotomy of mind and body seen in philosophy of the West.

1.2.2 Ūpmā (Returning the Soul)

As it is a sacred tradition, Ūpmā is intended to reconnect someone with his or her soul. It may require song, invocation, music, and correcting the symbolic point of the soul. Carried out by shamans or elders known as Sāmba or phedangba/ma, this ceremony represents relational and spiritual healing and, thus, heralds' harmony with oneself, the family, the environment, and ancestors (Sagant, 1996).

1.2.3 Mundhum, Oral Knowledge/Philosophy

Mundhum is the epistemic foundation of the Kirat Limbu tradition, encompassing myths, ceremonials, moral codes, cosmology, and history. Passed down orally from generation to generation, it serves as both spiritual and therapeutic guidance and as a cultural archive. This means that both the community memory embodied in communal existence and the explicit interpretative frameworks (both of which exist simultaneously) help us understand suffering and healing (Kovach, 2009).

1.3 Intellectual Organization

1.3.1 Human Survival and the Function of the Soul

According to the Sām-Ūpmā philosophy, human beings are interconnected with nature, community, ancestors, and the metaphysical universe. The sām or soul is one aspect of this dynamic web of interactions, not an independent being. People think of illness as a disruption to these relationships

rather than simply a biochemical or psychological dysfunction (Kirmayer et al, 2014).

1.3.2. Soul Loss and Mental Illness

The loss of the self, often resulting from trauma, grief, or spiritual neglect, can manifest in symptoms similar to depression, anxiety, or disassociation. We see those as spiritual dislocations and psychological problems. In this manner, the Ūpmā ritual becomes a therapeutic tool designed to induce harmony through the relational, narrative, and spiritual reconnection (Gone, 2013).

1.3.3 Ūpmā: The Restorative Redeemer

Clinical and impersonal traditional psychiatry sometimes stands in stark contrast to Ūpmā rituals, which are participatory, symbolic, and steeped in community. They are really helpful in keeping the personal narrative within the larger cosmological and societal context. The emergence of the psychotherapeutic process thus avails itself of narrative, ritual, and social reintegration (Watkins & Shulman, 2008) in relational modalities that are also therapeutic goals in both indigenous psychologies and narrative therapy.

1.4 Modern Importance

The Sām−Ūpmā model challenges Western universalism through a localized, spiritual framework suitable for efforts toward the decolonization of mental health (Smith, 2012).

In line with trauma-informed and culturally grounded models, community-based care shifts the focus from individual treatment to communal healing processes.

Indigenous psychology provides support for and modeling of indigenous methods of knowing, being, and healing, which are becoming more and more acknowledged in global health systems (Kovach, 2009).

The technology of open-access publishing and digital humanities has made it possible for these ideas to be preserved and disseminated worldwide and still under the ownership of indigenous people.

1.5 Possible Uses

Creating room for Ūpmā - Mundhum narratives where culturally grounded treatment models will help mental health therapy evolve.

Cultural counseling models tailor therapeutic processes using indigenous cosmologies and communal values.

Interdisciplinary approaches to epistemology and comparative philosophy are so valid and, hence, we are presenting Sām-Ūpmā as a stream of studies under the umbrella of academic philosophy.

Choral practices, including chant, narrative, and ritual within investigations of embodied healing, indigenous arts, healing arts and ritual studies

Last thought.

The Sām-Ūpmā Mundhum Philosophy is a living indigenous perspective that amalgamates psychological, communal, and spiritual aspects of life. Focusing on relational wholeness, oral wisdom, and ceremonial practice, it offers a compelling alternative to dominant paradigms of health and healing. Based in the Kirat Limbu tradition, it invites us to

conceptualize mental well-being through an ancestral, communal and holy lens.

Chapter 2: The Emergence of a Philosophy

2.1 The Origin

The Sām-Ūpmā Mundhum Philosophy is a creation of Eastern Nepal's Kirat Limbu individual's spiritual indigenous practices and life experiences. As with many indigenous belief systems, this concept was passed down orally among the Kirat Limbu people of Eastern Nepal, sung in rituals and stories that followed a rhythmic cadence. It's a philosophy that lives in communities, not classrooms.

This chapter explores how this worldview developed and why it is being reconsidered at a time of mounting psychological distress and cultural alienation around the globe. At its core, the concept offers a critical counterpoint to the increasingly mechanistic and individualistic view of mental health. The methodology of Sām-Ūpmā underscores that well-being is holistic, encompassing spirituality, social, and ecological dimensions of well-being.

According to Kirat belief, a person is believed to have their soul (sām) leave their body when they are stark shocked, scared, sad or in trauma. This imbalance leads to mental, emotional, and physical disharmony. Unlike biomedical psychiatry, which often compartmentalizes symptoms to the brain, this indigenous approach considers suffering to be a rupture in the balance of soul, body, nature and ancestry. And other Indigenous cultures from around the world have analogous notions: "susto" in Latin America (Gone, 2013), and soul loss in Siberian shamanism (Krippner, 2002).

The rite of Ūpmā—the summoning back of the soul — is more than a matter of symbolism. It is a healing system built on cultural logic and guided by the oral scripture system of Mundhum. This technique can involve a healer (Sāmba or Phedangba/ma), chanting, specific artefacts, and community. It highlights the fullness of the individual and their interconnectedness with the whole. Rituals act as a bridge to reconnect with your universe and redeem meaning from suffering.

Australia has seen growing critique of the dominance of Western psychological approaches from Indigenous psychology and postcolonial studies experts in the last couple of decades. Other academics, such as Shawn Wilson (2008) and Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012), advocate study that recognises Indigenous knowledge systems and traditions have their own wholeness and are not only additions to Western perspectives. Sām-Ūpmā Mundhum formalises a Kirat perspective on philosophy, suffering, and healing.

This chapter sets the scene for exploring sām, Ūpmā, and mundhum working together to cure illness, achieve balance, and lead a life of significance. It calls on psychologists, philosophers, healers, and seekers to hear the wisdom persevered through chant and firelight.

2.2 Importance of indigenous worldviews

As the 21st century carries on, technology, materialism, and rampant modernisation are threatening to untether the harmony between human life, nature, and the bonds of community. Incidences of mental health illnesses, suicide, anxiety, isolation, and cultural disorientation are all on the rise. This is a context that increasingly reveals the

shortcomings of Western-orientated medicine and psychology in offering either panaceas or a way to address this (Kirmayer et al. 2014).

Under these circumstances, one can clearly see the value of indigenous perspective. Indigenous ideas, such as the Sām-Ūpmā Mundhum Philosophy, are not only cultural relics. Grounded in the understanding of balance in relationships, communities, nature, and the spirit, they are complete knowledge systems (Kovach, 2009; Smith, 2012).

Thus, sām refers to the soul; Ūpmā to the ritual to get back the lost soul; and mundhum to the oral knowledge system related to life. These ideas provide other ways of dealing with the psychological, societal, and moral problems of today. At moments of loneliness, despair, and spiritual emptiness (Gone, 2013), a Sām-Ūpmā philosophy profoundly focuses on the interdependence of person, society, and cosmos.

Sām-Ūpmā and other philosophies give us a unique perspective on "truth." It aligns with both Indigenous epistemology (Smith, 2012; Kovach, 2009) and phenomenological philosophy (Merleau-Ponty, 1962), which view truth as not originating from conceptualization or theory but emerging from lived experience and meaningful contact. For example, when someone achieves emotional peace and harmony through familial rituals and communal relationships, their lived experience becomes healing—and that experience is "truth" for them.

Integrating indigenous worldviews enhances cultural relevance, locality, and social justice in mental health services (Watkins and Shulman, 2008). More so, these ideologies contest colonial knowledge institutions, demanding the

recognition and rehabilitative recognition of diverse ways of knowing (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018).

Modern applications of Sām-Ūpmā Mundhum, for example, need not be limited to cultural preservation approaches. Rather, they offer sound and timely guidance for navigating the challenges of life, health, education, and social reform in the 21st century.

2.3 The Historical and Cultural Context

The Sām-Ūpmā Philosophy stems from the Kirat Limbu people, one of the oldest indigenous communities in the Himalayan region. The Kirat Limbu cosmology has been preserved through oral tradition for thousands of years and features a rich blend of cosmological, ecological, anthropological, and ethical aspects that have a profound impact on daily life and cultural identity.

Historically, Kirat civilization is believed to have existed before Vedic Aryans populated the Indian subcontinent (Regmi, 1969; Banerjee, 1955; Sharma, 1989). Though mentioned in ancient Sanskrit scriptures, the Kirat people were often portrayed as mountain dwellers with distinct customs and spiritual practices (Kumar, 2003; Vaidya, 1993). Over the course of decades of sociopolitical changes and the consolidation of the larger Kirat confederation's identity under dominant civilisations, the Limbu sub-group has remained steadfast, maintaining its own language (Limbu/Yakthungpan) and rituals and philosophical systems (Chemjong, 2003).

At the heart of tradition among the Limbus is the Mundhum, a collective body of oral literature, including

stories of creation, moral instructions, genealogies, cosmological stories, and healing traditions. The notions, such as sām (soul) and Ūpmā (soul-calling ritual), are conveyed and preserved by Mundhum. They are oral traditions maintained through ritualized performances of chants and lectures by spiritual elder figures throughout space and time called phedangba/ma, Sāmba, or yeba/ma (Sagant, 1996).

The phedangma (ritual specialist) fulfils a crucial cultural role. Spiritual guides and healers are not intermediaries between people and the spirit realm but healers, historians, and philosophers. Occupying the role of both priest and doctor, they conduct soul-calling ceremonies, interpret dreams and omens and chant the Mundhum for moral and spiritual guidance. Ūpmā is thus a significant part of Limbu culture and the metaphysical idea of losing (and recovering) the soul has been preserved through their work.

To appreciate the Sām-Ūpmā philosophy, you must understand the Limbu people and their symbiosis with their environment. Sacred forests, rivers, and stones are seen as living beings and are vital to ritual practice. Healing rituals are often performed outdoors, reinforcing the philosophy's environmental ethics of interdependence and reverence for nature.

Such indigenous rituals have been put at risk by colonial and postcolonial encounters. The increasing state structures, the presence of Western medicine, and religious conversion campaigns have contributed to the diminishing role of traditional healers and Mundhum narratives. However, the commitment of the Limbu community and the sacred value

of oral knowledge have facilitated the preservation and revival of these traditions (Smith 2012).

In conclusion, the Sām-Ūpmā Philosophy can be a humane educational paradigm not only to pass on the knowledge of the ancestors but also to address modern ills like mental health issues, ecological descent, and cultural alienation. Such a contextualization would allow us to see this philosophy as an intricate, versatile, and spiritually inspired system that continues to orient the Kirat Limbu people — arguably the entire world — towards holistic well-being.

Chapter 3: Core Concepts

The Sām-Ūpmā Built on a trio of fundamental, interrelated ideas—sām (soul or vital awareness), Ūpmā (the process of calling back the lost soul), and Mundhum (the indigenous oral philosophy and knowledge heritage of the Kirat people)—Mundhum Philosophy. These are the foundations of Kirat cosmology, healing techniques, and communal life; they are not just definitions. These ideas, their linkages, and their modern significance will be thoroughly explored in this chapter.

3.1. Sām: Conscious Vitality and the Soul

Within Kirat tradition, "sām" is the soul, spirit, life force, or vital energy. It is a basic component of human life, not merely a religious conviction. Within the human body, sām is an invisible but life-sustaining power.

- Though not outward, the sām can be experienced through dreams, intuition, and spiritual communication—experiential but invisible.

- Strong trauma, terror, or emotional stress could drive the sām from the body.

- Recoverable: The sām can be remembered and reintegrated long after it is lost.

Psychological imbalance resulting from a lost sām can show itself as despair, perplexity, isolation, or suicidal inclinations. Western psychologists would define this disorder as trauma, dissociation, or loss of self (van der Kolk, 2014;

Krippner, 2002). From the Kirat perspective, it denotes spiritual displacement and a disturbance in equilibrium.

3.2. Ūpmā: A Soul-Restoring Cultural Approach

Ūpmā is the customistic process of remembering the lost soul. Aimed at restoring mental and spiritual balance, it is not only a religious event but also a therapeutic technique based in cultural logic.

3.2.1 Ūpmā has two main features: a ritualistic process carried out by spiritual leaders like Sāmbas or Phedangba/ma.

- Community Participation: The custom entails family and community support.

- Cultural Language of Dialogue: Sound, chants, and symbolic instruments let one speak with the soul.

3.2.2 Ūpmā with modern psychotherapy:

Ūpmā is unique in its use of indigenous, spiritual, and cultural techniques, even if it mimics modern psychotherapy, guided meditation, or trauma recovery (Gone, 2013; Levine, 1997).

3.3. Mundhum:

— Local Knowledge System and Philosophy

The Kirat people have their basic oral tradition, called mundhum. It offers cosmological angles on the universe, life, soul, disease, and healing. People recall and shout it, not by writing, but by living it.

3.3.1 Features of Mundhum: Passed down orally over generations based on ancestral knowledge.

- Mundhum is founded not on reason but rather on lived experience, rhythm, and intuition in order of experience.

- Philosophy of Sound and Symbolism: Mundhum chants have therapeutic resonance from their cadence and tone.

3.3.2 Mundhum's Part in Sām and Ūpmā:

Mundhum offers the intellectual basis for the whole healing tradition, gives the Ūpmā ceremony an organisation, and identifies the core of sām. Sām-Ūpmā Philosophy's spiritual centre is here.

3.4. Interrelationship of the Three Concepts

Concept	Role	Relationship
Sām	Soul/Consciousness	Core element of mental balance
Ūpmā	Soul-calling ritual	Cultural process of healing
Mundhum	Oral philosophy	Structural foundation of the worldview

These three components are rather entwined; without one, the framework is lacking. Ūpmā is required when sām is gone; mundhum guides both and provides direction and purpose. The Sām-Ūpmā Mundhum Philosophy thus becomes a whole and integrated life system.

3.5. Therapeutic and Symbolic Roles

— of Core Ideas

The Sām-Ūpmā Mundhum Philosophy is anchored not only in cosmological ideas and rituals but also in pragmatic and symbolic instruments for healing and preserving balance within people and societies. Its three fundamental elements—Sām, Ūpmā, and Mundhum—serve mixed symbolic and therapeutic roles that direct the Kirat Limbu knowledge of well-being, identity, and recovery.

Soul, or Sām: Representation of Psychological Integrity and Life Force

Symbolically, Sām stands for the life force, or spiritual essence, driving the human being. It is the experienced core of one's identity, consciousness, and life, not only a soul in the abstract religious sense. Whether someone is in crisis or equilibrium depends on whether sām is present or absent. Its very relational symbology suggests an invisible yet strong link between the individual, ancestors, nature, and the universe (Chemjong, 2003).

Therapeutically, the person suffers emotional imbalance, anxiety, or depression when sām is thought to be lost or disturbed—from trauma, grief, fear, or spiritual separation. Whereas biological methods localise mental disease in the brain, the Sām-Ūpmā model regards it as a breakdown of the soul's balance with totality. Understanding the problem as soul loss, the therapy then emphasises spiritual rebalancing instead of physiological restoration (Gone, 2013).

Ūpmā, or Soul-calling: Reconnection and Restoration Ritual.

Ūpmā is a therapeutic intervention as well as a symbolic ritual. Symbolically, it is a cultural drama of the soul's coming back. The ceremonial components—chanting, offering, invocation—are not random gestures but rather intensely felt representations of healing and memory. By means of Ūpmā, the soul is invited, directed, and welcomed back, therefore reflecting both a metaphysical trip and emotional recuperation (Sagant, 1996).

Therapeutically, Ūpmā rites restore relationship and spiritual harmony. They call for the individual, the family,

society, and the environment to all play roles. This community participation grounds healing inside common memory and affirms the individual's experience. As the soul metaphorically returns, the person reinscribes into a web of meaning, belonging, and responsibility. Without medicines or clinical diagnosis, the practice also promotes catharsis, emotional expression, and transformation (Kirmayer et al., 2014).

Mundhum, or oral knowledge, is a philosophical system and healing narrative.

Mundhum serves as the Limbu people's living philosophical system as well as their holy book. Symbolic of ancestral knowledge, mythic continuity, and group cultural DNA, it stands for Every chant or story offers not only moral and cosmological lessons but also directions for emotional resilience, spiritual protection, and ethical behaviour (Chemjong, 2003).

Therapeutically, mundhum is significant during the Ūpmā ceremony. Recitation of particular mundhum stories and songs provides the suffering of the individual significance. It clarifies suffering as a component of a larger cosmic and social pattern. Thus, we see the patient not as lonely or disordered but as someone momentarily cut off from their narrative thread. By situating personal crises within the context of community memory and ancestral wisdom, mundhum serves as a therapeutic tool for reintegrating fragmented awareness (Kovach, 2009).

Integrated Symbolic-Therapeutic Matrix

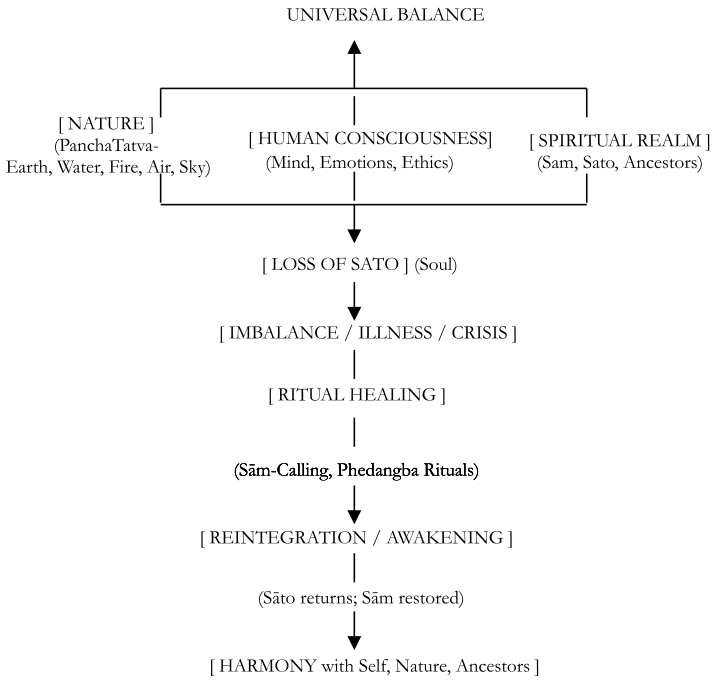
Three ideas taken together create an inseparable matrix. Sām is the ontological condition; Ūpmā is the therapeutic

technique; mundhum is the epistemological guidance. Symbolically, they convey moral responsibility, respect for the invisible, and interconnectedness. Therapeutically, they provide a relational, all-encompassing, spiritually grounded method of recovery.

The symbolic and therapeutic connotations of Sām, Ūpmā, and Mundhum provide not just cultural knowledge but also strong instruments for psychological and spiritual healing in a period when many people feel disconnected, anxious, and divided. Their integration questions the lines separating ritual, medicine, philosophy, and story and offers an indigenous form of care that relates to both ancestral legacy and modern human need.

3.6. Conceptual Framework

Conceptual Framework: The Healing Circle of Soul, Nature, and Consciousness


UNIVERSAL BALANCE
[NATURE]
(PanchaTatva-
Earth, Water, Fire, Air, Sky)
[HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS]
(Mind, Emotions, Ethics)
[SPIRITUAL REALM]
(Sam, Sato, Ancestors)
[LOSS OF SATO] (Soul)
[IMBALANCE / ILLNESS / CRISIS]
[RITUAL HEALING]
(Sām-Calling, Phedangba Rituals)
[REINTEGRATION / AWAKENING]
(Sāto returns; Sām restored)
[HARMONY with Self, Nature, Ancestors]

Essential Substances Defined

3.6.1 The five elements are symbolised by Panchatatva.

Earth, water, fire, air, and sky are not only physical components but also cosmic connections for soul and life.

3.6.2. "Sāto" (Soul) and "Sām" (Vital Essence)

Unbalance, anxiety, or trauma can shatter an individual's soul or spirit.

Sām: The essential nature of consciousness, life force, and memory.

According to this viewpoint, physical, mental, or emotional illness might result from the loss of Soul/Sāto.

3.6.3. Sām Calling Rituals for Spiritual Healing

A Shaman or Phedangba, during a ritual invocation, will lead the way back to health by means of song, rhythm, and symbolic offerings.

3.6.4. Connection of Humans, Environment, and Our Ancestors

Illness is a reflection of a disconnect from the natural world, from ethics, or from ancestral guidance, not just from oneself.

3.6.5. Coming to Your Own and Reintegrating

When one's soul returns, they regain a sense of unity with the cosmos, focus, and purpose in life.

3.7 Philosophical Significance

Domain	Description
Epistemology	Knowledge comes from ancestral memory (Mundhum), nature, and intuitive wisdom.
Ontology	Being is interconnected: self, soul, and elements are part of one continuum.
Ethics	Right action sustains harmony; wrong action causes loss or fragmentation.
Aesthetics	Ritual, chant, and symbolic expression are paths to inner and cosmic order.

Chapter 4: Philosophical Structure

The Sām-Ūpmā Mundhum The philosophy encompasses an ontology (being), an epistemology (knowing), and a theory of pain and healing, constituting an entire philosophical framework rather than just a cultural heritage. Through the lens of an analysis of the philosophy's perspective, logic, and ethical foundation, this chapter explores the central framework of this philosophy.

4.1. Ontology:

— relational being and the human soul

The great principle is that humans are deeply connected to a web of relationships — with their bodies, souls, clans, ancestors, and the ecosystem — not isolated individuals. Sām is the ultimate soul force that maintains the balance in this ecosystem, and suffering is birthed when any of these elements are disconnected.

4.1.1. Man — Something More Than Just a Body

In contrast to Western dualism that separates mind and body—for example, Cartesian dualism—the Kirat perspective is holistic or whole. It is not that the body and sām are oppositional; they cohabit. The soul shifts, departs, or comes back based on emotional, environmental, or spiritual factors — not permanently ending up within the body.

4.1.2 Interdependência Cosmológica

The human is involved inseparably in the universe. This domain of natural elements, community practices, ancestral connections, and ecosystems is a singular field. Soul dislocation or psychological pains from disturbance can occur

when any one area—spiritual neglect or an ecological imbalance, for example—suffers.

Focusing on interdependence as opposed to individualism, this relational ontology resonates with indigenous ideas, like the Andean notion of "Ayllu" and the African philosophy of "Ubuntu (Gonzales, 2010).

4.2. Epistemology:

— Knowing Through Experience, Ritual, and Sound

In the Sām-Ūpmā system, knowledge is not manufactured within laboratories or lecture halls. It is fed by rituals, remembered in songs, and made real in embodied experience.

4.2.1. Oral Knowledge as the Sacred Method

Mundhum, an oral tradition, conveys cosmology and ethics through metaphor, rhythm, and repetition. Truth is not debated but revealed, heard, felt, and internalised. They are phenomenological and symbolic ways of knowing, focused strongly on place and relationship.

4.2.2. Sound and Chant: Tools for Epistemology

The chanting invoked in the Ūpmā ritual is not just for performance but rather for memory and healing technologies. The vibratory qualities of music become vehicles for soul retrieval and emotional rebalancing. So listening is a spiritual act: we are absorbing knowledge.

This aligns with Indigenous epistemologies (Smith, 2012; Kovach, 2009) and phenomenological philosophy (Merleau-Ponty, 1962), which maintain that relationship and perception, rather than abstraction, are the source of reality.

4.3. Theory of Pain and Recovery

The Sām-Ūpmā Philosophy holds that sickness happens not because of moral failure or neurochemical imbalance but due to loss or weakening of sām.

4.3.1. Causes of Suffering

- Loss of the soul (dislocation of sām)
- Spiritual or ancestral neglect
- Trauma, grief, or fear
- Cultural disconnection and ecological imbalance.

4.3.2. The Healing Process

- Ūpmā, i.e., restoring by ritual
- Engagement with the community and invocation of ancestors
- Reconnection with nature and spiritual cosmology

Consequently, this holistic process is opposed to individualistic biomedical models, promoting relational, rhythmic, and spiritually attuned healing processes instead.

4.4. Ethics of Care and Responsibility

The Sām-Ūpmā Philosophy is rooted in a relational morality by which:

- The healer is not greater but is a facilitator.
- The patient is not broken; he's just not plugged in.
- The community is not inert but highly engaged.
- The cosmos is not passive but an active partner in healing.

This framework facilitates a decolonial and compassionate articulation of care; it is relevant not only in the Indigenous context but more broadly in global mental health discourses.

Chapter 5: The Cultural Power of Mundhum

The Sām-Ūpmā Mundhum Philosophy describes Mundhum as not just a phenomenon of oral history but a compendium of culture, cosmic consciousness, and a worldview of lived experience. In this chapter, we explore the cultural, spiritual, and therapeutic streams of Mundhum and discuss its role in the existence and healing practices of the Kirat community.

5.1. Mundhum: Oral to Cosmological Thought.

This is Mundhum, not just an anthology of ancient tales but an oral philosophy for the Kirat people that, through oral tradition, expresses the intricacies and symbiotic relationship between life, death, soul, nature, and society. It is created through a shruti (hearing) tradition, relying on memory over literacy when it is produced (Kovach, 2009).

5.1.1 Myth, Rhythm, and Orality.

- Mundhum is a mixture of melodies, rhythmic chanting, and symbolic language.
- Narratives serve social, moral, and spiritual purposes beyond entertainment.

Mundhum Recitation as Knowledge Regeneration Smith (2012) indicates that recitation of Mundhum is a manifestation and maker of knowledge regeneration, confirming its vitality.

5.5.2 Mundhum's Cosmological View

- Cosmos is seen as sentient, cognisant, and relational.

● Balance between nature, man, and the soul is necessary for the peace.

5.2. Mundhum and the Soul:

— Re-establishing the Connection

Mundhum acts as a light for recovery and reintegration of the soul if it becomes disoriented or displaced. Its recitation calls the soul, converses with it, and aids its return to the body.

5.2.1. The Soulful Echo of Mundhum Mantras

● Mundhum mantras not only produce sound but also emotional energy to reconnect body and soul.

● Merleau-Ponty (1962) describes mantras as spiritual vibrations, not just words.

5.2.2. Rekindling the Soul

Mundhum may help people to reconnect to their soul by finely tuning the ritualistic learning, reciting, and enacting of ceremonies.

Mundhum teaches that the loss of the soul is a spiritual dissociation rather than a mental illness.

5.3. The Conservation of Cultural Existence

Mundhum structures not only philosophy; however, it is a means of cultural survival. As part of Kirat community identity, history, and philosophical freedom, mundhum recitation is crucial. It encourages social cohesion, acts as a cultural education mechanism for successive generations, and

offers an alternate epistemology to colonial knowledge systems (Smith, 2012).

5.4. Dialogue Between Body and Soul

— in Kirat Tradition

A lesson from the Sām-Ūpmā viewpoint.

The traditional knowledge and lifestyle of the Kirat Limbu community treat the relationship between the body and soul in unity but not dualism. According to Chemjong (2003) & Sagant (1996), the Sām-Ūpmā Mundhum Philosophy regards the body as a physical object and the soul as a principle of consciousness, flowing and in a state of balance together, whereas Western psychology or philosophy sees them as separate entities.

The body is the living abode of the soul, and its balance translates to health, cognition, emotions, and social responsibility. When the soul (śām) leaves the body due to trauma, fear and sadness, or social alienation, the body can be rendered weak and exhausted or mentally unwell. Symptoms are the pain of the body and the silent language of the soul (Gone, 2013).

In this sense, Ūpmā means soul communication. When the soul is separated from the body, ritual practitioners like the phedangma or Sāmba call it back with ceremonial acts, asking, "Where have you gone?" It is not merely a spiritual invocation but a symbolic technique of restoring body and soul. Healing starts by listening to the soul and reading what the body has to say (Kovach, 2009).

In mundhum are mythical stories, symbolic conversations, and ritual narratives here explaining this

relationship. A body without a soul looks like a corpse. However, after the Ūpmā, this proves that there is no physical body but a mechanism whose vitality exists in the presence or absence of the soul (Chemjong, 2003).

The body and the spirit are in constant communication, according to Sām-Ūpmā philosophy. When the body aches, the soul cries; when the soul sickens, the body languishes. Healing is the act of re-engaging in this dialogue—listening, speaking, and understanding (Sagant, 1996).

This dialogic process is integral to understanding the mental health issues we face today. This Kirat view of the universe, which cannot distinguish between the soul and the body, stands in opposition to modern senses of isolation, psychological discomfort, and loathing of the body. The Sām-Ūpmā Mundhum Philosophy invites people to reconnect with their bodies, converse with their souls, and re-establish societal balance (Gone, 2013; Kovach, 2009).

5.5. The healing power of song.

Rhythm, sound, and structure of Mundhum are all instruments of healing themselves. Like contemporary music therapy, Mundhum uses sound, memory, and emotion to aid in the reconnection of individuals with themselves.

Another pastime of merit is chanting Mundhum, which helps in gaining better emotional balance and mental clarity.

5.6 Conclusion

Sām-Ūpmā Philosophy is based on Mundhum. Its cultural significance is an awareness — not a recollection. The wisdom it offers on life, mourning, recovery, and

existence isn't the sole province of the Kirat; it is a beacon of illumination for all humankind.

In this chapter we looked at how the Sām-Ūpmā model of reality bears on the modern theories of mental health.

Chapter 6: Soul Loss Experiences — Case Studies

Pain and Healing: The Sām-Ūpmā Mundhum Philosophy: A Conceptual Framework. In contrast, lived experience gives richer details to complement what we see in data. This chapter looks at the Ūpmā rite of the Kirat Limbu tradition for restoring soul loss Sām-Ūpmā through case studies. The aims are to illustrate the ways that soul loss expresses itself, the ways communities respond, and how healing happens both individually and collectively.

6.1. Cultural and Emotional Aspects

— of Soul Loss

In Kirat culture, soul loss is often regarded as being because of shock, fear, grief, or contempt for nature or ancestors. This dislocation might happen in the wake of a traumatic episode: a disastrous illness, a crash, a long-term experience of mourning, or a fearsomely otherworldly experience. Whereas Western medicine might interpret these symptoms as manifestations of depression, hallucinations, or confusion, the Kirat perspective holds that the person's sām has left the body, temporarily or permanently.

6.2. A Case Study:

— a present-day child following a forest sighting

A ten-year-old youngster suffered a sudden shock while alone in the forest, which resulted in his introversion, stop of speaking, and seeming separation from reality. Local seniors read this as

soul loss. In a Ūpmā ritual, a Sāmba invoked the name of the child, recounted the journey they had taken through the forest, and requested that the spirits of the forest return their soul. Within a few days, the toddler was speaking and acting normally again.

This example shows the therapeutic aspects of story, symbolic language, and group support to acquire emotional control and psychological presence.

6.3 A Case Study:

— Soul displacement following a delivery.

A young woman suffered from recurrent nightmares, disorientation, and a fear of being alone after a horrific birth. Her family asked for help from a Phedangma, a type of shaman, who determined that the mother's illness was a case of soul displacement resulting from the trauma of childbirth. Rituals, chanting, and offerings to ancestor spirits commemorated the mother's soul; over the subsequent weeks, the symptoms gradually improved.

Here, Ūpmā spiritualization tackles the spiritual-emotional component negatively affecting postpartum, which is frequently medicalized yet culturally contextualized within the Sām-Ūpmā worldview.

6.4. Collective Psychology: Community Healing

In both instances, the healing was beyond the individual. Through performing rituals, singing, preparing sacred objects,

and praying together, the family and community engaged actively in the process. It embodies a holistic understanding of mental health whereby healing has an intersubjective and cultural basis (Gone, 2013).

In some ways, it is also a rebuke of a mainstream biological paradigm that tends to treat disease as isolated to the individual mind or brain, emphasizing instead a community-orientated understanding of health.

6.5. Insights and Reflections

Soul loss thus is a culturally appropriate rendering of psychological grief in these cases.

- Ūpmā and emotive presentations facilitate personal and interpersonal harmony.
- Healing is participatory—a way through stories, songs, and the beliefs we hold together.
- Active community participation is necessary in therapy.

This approach offers not only documentation of traditional but also practical knowledge for integrative mental health work in cross-cultural contexts.

6.6. Soul Loss Case Studies

— with a Focus on Modern Psychology Interpretation

Sām-Ūpmā Mundhum Philosophy teaches people that any loss of their soul (sām) results in mental instability, social alienation, and emotional crisis. It addresses not only the brain as the source of mental health problems but also an imbalance between body and soul, disturbances in social

interactions, and a lack of cultural context. This view of the world is consistent with many disciplines in Western psychology, especially trauma therapy, dissociative disorders, and narrative therapy.

(i) Dissociative disorders and the concept of soul loss

In Western psychology, "dissociation" is the term for when someone feels detached from reality or from their body due to extreme stress or trauma. Within the DSM-5, this falls under dissociative identity disorder or depersonalisation disorder. Soul loss, as noted in the Sām-Ūpmā paradigm, is also comparable to similar experiences (Gone, 2013).

(ii) Trauma Therapy and Sām-Ūpā Ritual

Trauma therapy focuses on accessing and working through traumatic memories to help regulate emotional responses and form new meaning. Here, ritual healers known as phedangma or Sāmba perform rituals to regain lost souls, lost relationships, lost memory, and lost culture. They are socially and spiritually reintegrated (Sagant, 1996; Chemjong, 2003).

Case Study: Soul Loss in an Adolescent Girl

In a village in eastern Nepal, a 16-year-old girl described feeling emotional distress, insomnia, and "not being herself" as a result of the pressure from school's final exam. Her family invited a phedangma to carry out the Ūpmā ritual. From the morning after the ritual, the girl claimed to feel calm and balanced.

This experience connects dissociation with soul loss.

Case Study—Grief and Spiritual Recovery of an Elderly Man

An elderly man, grieving the loss of his wife, said he felt "I am not in my body." He withdrew from social situations, plagued by mental fatigue and sorrow. In turn, a Sāmba used mundhum narratives and rituals to put a balm over his soul.

This is similar to the practice of re-storying used in the field of narrative therapy (Kovach 2009).

Comparative Summary

The Sām-Ūpmā concept considers the soul as a real, lived, and reparable aspect of the self, rather than describing emotional or psychological states as is often done in Western psychology to describe distress. Both systems seek to hear the person's grief, offer it meaning, and return it to balance. The Sām-Ūpmā approach takes the realms of culture, spirituality, and communion to greater depth.

This area might be where Sām-Ūpmā philosophy could aid contemporary psychology, especially with trauma, dissociation, and social alienation. It offers an integrated, culturally rooted, and dialogic approach toward mental recuperation.

Chapter 7: Positioning SUMP in Global Philosophy

Sām-Ūpmā Mundhum Philosophy (SUMP) locates itself in its locality, in its ethnic identity, and also as a meaningful dialogue partner in the broader philosophical exchange occurring across the planet. Sām-Ūpmā is an autochthonous epistemology that is drawn from the Kirat people's lived life-world and rituals. We can usefully place this perspective within larger discourses in philosophy, psychology, and spirituality. This chapter explores the relationship between this indigenous paradigm and other global philosophies.

7.1. The Power of Indigenous Thought

— and Global Dialogue

Anglo-American (neo-)European philosophy has never given this corpus of thought the respect it deserves. Nonetheless, a growing body of work in decolonial and comparative philosophy has helped pave the way for the incorporation of non-Western thought (Smiths, 2012; Mignolo, 2011). The Sām-Ūpmā model is consistent with indigenous understandings of relationship-based worldviews, spirituality, and community.

Sām-Ūpmā, borrowed from cosmology, is all about interconnectedness with the environment, ancestors, or universe, for that matter, rather than human freedom. These theories undermine the Cartesian, individualistic ontology that lies at the core of Western culture.

7.2. Philosophical Convergences:

— Comparative Natural balance and relational ethics

System	Key Theme	Common Ground with Sām-Ūpmā
Ubuntu (Africa)	"I am because we are"	Emphasis on community, reciprocity, and shared identity
Ayllu (Andes)	Ecological kinship	Sacred interdependence with land and lineage
Vedanta (India)	Atman and Brahman	Spiritual unity and soul as essence of being
Taoism (China)	Harmony and flow	Natural balance and relational ethics

These systems share with Sām-Ūpmā a recognition of cyclical time, moral cosmology, and non-dualistic views of reality.

7.3. Decolonial Epistemology:

— Beyond Western Hegemony

The Sām-Ūpmā mundhum philosophy adds a new nuance to decolonial thinking by suggesting indigenous ways of understanding mind, soul, and healing beyond materialism

and pathologization. It highlights oral knowledge and ritual as philosophical tools, along with the importance of relational healing, not just personal healing.

The soul is relevant for consciousness and identity.

Sām-Ūpmā re-establishes intellectual space for indigenous insights in worldwide conversations, with consequences for both mental health and more general constructions of being and knowledge (Smith, 2012).

7.4. Toward a Pluralist Philosophy of Healing.

Sām-Ūpmā joins a rising, nuanced chorus of voices asking for philosophical pluralism, a recognition that no one tradition holds a monopoly on truth. This approach calls for the honouring of indigenous traditions, the embracing of cultural and spiritual healing systems, and the fostering of mutual respect between traditional and scientific worldviews.

Sām-Ūpmā develops a philosophical and psychological moral and metaphysical language that supplements the world's other traditions.

Chapter 8: Possibilities and Challenges

Culturally, the Sām-Ūpmā Mundhum Philosophy is a tool that can deeply enrich our contemporary dialogue on mental health, philosophy, and human life. Yet any doctrine of the past would encounter difficulties in attempting to articulate itself in a contemporary setting. This chapter explores the possibilities, practices, limitations, and limitations of inclusive development under the Sām-Ūpmā paradigm.

8.1. The possibilities

8.1.1 Contribution to knowledge and teaching

Sām-Ūpmā Philosophy encourages research from the indigenous knowledge system. It adduces useful new philosophical, psychological, and cultural material for course use. As a paradigm within the ontological knowledge of Indigenous Methodologies, it can be productive (Kovach, 2009; Smith, 2012).

8.1.2. Mental Health and the Principle of Belonging

Sām-Ūpmā thought can be utilized as a culturally relevant model of care in mental health. Fosters healing-—have more respect for place, healing through imagery, and traditional understandings (Gone, 2013).

8.1.3 Philosophy and Spiritual Conversation Reborn

Sāmā-Ūmhā philosophy supports a recovery of spiritual concepts and oral memories in the outcome of their dislocation to Western, secular philosophy.

8.2. Challenges

8.2.1 Formal Acknowledgment and Recordation.

Philosophical tradition Sām-Ūpmā philosophy is mostly based on oral tradition. It is extremely challenging to document, translate, and integrate this philosophy into teaching materials that are in line with scientific approaches.

8.2.2 The threat of cultural appropriation

Surface adaptations of indigenous KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS might lead to distortion or cultural appropriation. This runs the danger of converting great wisdom into a taste sensation.

8.2.3 Political and institutional injustice

It is still a challenge to claim a space for home-grown ideas that flourish inside the offices of governments and universities, and particularly in systems that are premised on Western standards and evaluation systems.

8.3 Enabling the inclusive development

— of Sām-Ūpmā Mundhum Philosophy

Here are a few proposals for those who want to make Sām-Ūpmā philosophy more inclusive and more responsive:

- Work with community knowledge bearers in documentation and preservation of the tradition.

- Set up a parallel education system that, while drawing on traditional knowledge systems, is formal.
- Foster this vision in national and global debates through conferences, debates, and policy advocacy.

Chapter 9: SUMP and Contemporary Mental Health

Sām- Ūpmā Mundhum philosophy (SUMP) proposes a mental health approach that can theoretically and practically communicate with the Western biological model. This chapter discusses Sām-Ūpmā mundhum thought with contemporary approaches in mental health, specifically by comparing and contrasting pain/suffering plus healing and the role of the soul and connections.

9.1. Approaches to Healing:

— Biomedical Model vs. Cultural Philosophy

Western mental health systems commonly think of mental disorders as brain-based (neurochemical, neurologic and pharmaceutical) problems. The Sām-Ūpmā System's pain is seen as due to spiritual disharmony, soul dislocation, and disconnection from the community.

From a Sām-Ūpmā perspective, PTSD would be understood as a type of soul loss, whereas from a Western perspective, it is explained as a neurological or psychological state (Krippner, 2002).

9.2. Psychology of the Soul and Relationship

In Sām-Ūpmā philosophy, the soul is not merely a metaphysical notion, as it constitutes the provider of consciousness, vital principle, and mental equilibrium. The missing or out-of-balance soul results in psychological torment.

This correlates with the current "self-in-relation" theory of mental health as it relates to social interaction, identity, and self-understanding (Kovach, 2009).

9.3. Ritual and Sām-Ūpmā:

— An Alternative Therapeutic Dialogue

The standard treatments for Western psychiatry are therapy, counselling and medication. Holistic healing is encouraged through the Ūpmā ceremony by calling in ancestors, nature, family and community to the Sām-Ūpmā system.

Ūpmā is described by Levine (1997) as culturally encoded therapeutic practice utilising sound, mantras, symbols, and stories, in conjunction with emotional support.

9.4. Nature of Healing:

— Not Individual, but Communal

Sām-Ūpmā philosophy acknowledges that healing is more than the patient-healer relationship. It is a people/community/culture-led operation, and everyone is hands-on.

This strategy aligns with the emergent framework of community-based mental health care, which recognises the salutogenic role of social support and cultural context in treatment (Gone, 2013)..

9.5. Alluvium, Complementarity,

— and the Way Forward

The Sām-Ūpmā model complements the view of mental health.

- It focuses on the soul and relationships.
- Relies on ritual and oral tradition to heal.
- Suggests a systems perspective for multicultural settings.

If mental health systems embrace and honour such perspectives, it would be a significant contribution to decolonising mental health (Smith, 2012).

Chapter 10: Comparative Analysis

A Comparative Analysis of Sām-Ūpmā Mundhum Philosophy and Western Psychotherapy:

Many concepts have been obvious by now, and it is time for an overall examination of conceptual, diagnostic, and therapeutic paradigms. Therefore, this chapter carefully looks at the philosophical ideas, diagnostic methods, and healing processes of Sām-Ūpmā Mundhum, a traditional therapy used by the Kirat Limbu people, compared to Western psychotherapy.

10.1 Philosophical backgrounds:

From an ontological and epistemological position, by examining the differences between these systems, the present research focuses on the various approaches to mental illness, healing, and the self by these systems. The results show that while Western psychotherapy mainly uses biomedical and cognitive-behavioral methods, the Sām-Ūpmā Mundhum treats mental illness in a more holistic, ecological, and spiritual way. Such a comparative analysis reminds us of the significance of the culturally inclusive mental health paradigms whose practice involves incorporating indigenous knowledge systems.

10.2 Paradigms:

The mental health paradigms significantly differ in terms of cultures, depending on specific ontological beliefs and epistemological traditions. Sām-Ūpmā Mundhum, the spiritual and philosophical model of Kirat Limbu people, envisages mental illness as a break in the spiritual and

ecological balance (Chemjong, 2003). In contrast, Western psychotherapy largely follows the model of biomedicine and cognition, explaining mental disorders as neurochemical imbalances or maladaptive thought patterns (Beck, 2011; Verywell Health, 2021). In this paper, these differences are being examined with a critical comparative eye, examining their implications for the course of treatment and cultural validity.

10.3 Conceptualisation of Mental Illness

Sām-Ūpmā Mundhum Perspective

In the Sām-Ūpmā Mundhum, mental illness is conceptualised as "sāto bolaunu" (call of soul/spirit) or a break in the person's link to ancestral spirits and nature (Chemjong, 2003; Subba, 2025). This perspective aligns with animistic and shamanic practices, which sometimes attribute emotional suffering to spiritual and cosmological contexts (Sagent, 1996; Subba, 1999). Diagnosis includes understanding dreams and using fortune-telling, along with agreement from the community, where healers (Phedangba/ma, Yeba/ma) perform soul-retrieval rituals to restore balance.

Western Psychotherapeutic Perspective

Western psychiatry and psychology are mostly based on the biomedical and cognitive views, conceptualising mental illness as a neurochemical imbalance (e.g., deficiency of serotonin) or maladaptive cognitive schemas (APA, 2022; Beck, 2011). The diagnoses are standardised in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5-TR) and International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11)

(symptomatology- and evidence-based intervention-focused; World Health Organisation [WHO], 2019).

10.4 Healing Approaches:

— Mechanisms and Therapeutic

Sām-Ūpmā Mundhum Healing Practices—

Healing in this tradition is a ritualistic, communal, and ecologically relational process that includes: (i) Chants (Mundhum recitations), (ii) sacrifice to deities and ancestors (iii) medicinal herbs and symbolic healing objects (Chemjong, 2003; Sagant, 1996). The healer is viewed as the spiritual mediator who enters trances in order to help an individual reconnect back to lost elements of the spirit (Sagent, 1996; Subba, 1999).

Western Psychotherapeutic Interventions

Western psychotherapy makes use of structured methods that are person-based or individualistic, comprising the following: (i) Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT) (Beck, 2011) (ii). Pharmacotherapy (SSRIs, antipsychotics) (APA, 2022) (iii) Psychoanalysis and the humanistic therapies. These methods focus on the reduction of symptoms and cognitive restructuring, which usually excludes the spiritual, social or ecological factors (Kohrt & Harper, 2008).

10.5 The Role of the Healer/Therapist:

Sām-Ūpmā Healer (Phedangma/Yeba)—

(i) Shaman's roles as a spiritual channel and culture guardian. (ii) Practices trance, divination and performance of

ritual. (iii) It is community-orientated and narrative-based (Sagent, 1996; Subba, 1999).

Western Psychotherapist—

(i) Doctor or therapist performs as a clinician using standard protocols. (ii) The therapy is grounded in empirical studies and follows established diagnostic manuals. The therapy is tailored to the individual and based on specific pathologies (Beck, 2011).

10.6 Concept of the Self:

Sām-Ūpmā Mundhum—

The self is seen as an interconnected being which includes: (i) Physical body (lus) (ii) spirit (sāto) (iii) ancestral lineage (thebang), and (iv) ecological harmony (nāgarī) (Sagent, 1996; Subba, 1999).

Western Psychotherapy—

Western therapy goes mostly through that the self is understood. (i) Psychological constructs (ego, cognition, behaviour) (ii) Autonomy of individual and intrapsychic dynamics (Beck, 2011).

10.7 Cultural and Ecological Contexts:

Sām-Ūpmā Mundhum—

(i) Basing from Kirat Limbu oral traditions and Himalayan ecology, (ii) Achieves nature-spirit interdependence (Chemjong, 2003).

Western Psychotherapy—

(i) Takes root from Eurocentric, individualistic, and secular paradigms (ii) In many cases fails to recognise ecological, social, cultural, and supernatural dimensions (Kohrt & Harper, 2008).

10.8 Implications for Global Mental Health:

This comparison analysis shows that Sām-Upma Mundhum presents a holistic alternative to the Western models, and this is especially the case with culturally congruent mental health care. Future research should explore: (i) Combined indigenous and Western models (ii) Decolonisation of mental health models to embrace animistic and ecological perspectives.

10.10 Conclusion

Although Western psychotherapy offers standardised treatments that have empirical evidence behind them, Sām-Ūpmā Mundhum comes from a spiritual and ecological perspective of mental well-being. A syncretic mental health paradigm that is sensitive to the two cultures can improve cultural competence and effectiveness of treatment for diverse groups.

Chapter 11. A Two-Decade Reflection

Suicide, Soul, and the Search for Healing: A Two-Decade Reflection—

A lot of time has passed since I studied and wrote some papers about suicide. As a student of public health, this subject is more than just something I study. It's also a big task and duty for me.

I tried to look at suicide from different points of view, including mental health, psychological reasons, social effects, my experience, and a biomedical one. Despite exploring these various perspectives, I still felt unable to fully understand suicide.

I was shocked to see how many Nepalis and their families died after leaving the country. On the one hand, I saw sad Nepalis who had left the country, and on the other, I saw their husbands or wives suffering in their country. The kind of pain was different, but the cause was the Sāme.

The modern medical system and psychology only study how the mind and body work together. Hormonal changes, changes in the surroundings, cognitive behaviors, or mental illness are all signs that something is wrong. These can be utilized as indicators to identify and address the underlying issues. But this method has some flaws.

Western theories only consider what they perceive as "scientific," disregarding native information as non-scientific.

This has led to the marginalization of cultural knowledge and traditional healing methods in today's public health field.

Whether you believe in the Sanatan tradition or the Mundhum theory of the Kirat Limbus, the soul and mind explain the deep connection between the body and society. When someone falls ill or seems emotionally unwell, one of the first things done in many Nepali communities is a *swastishanti* ritual. It's not just a ceremony—it genuinely helps people feel calmer, more connected, and more at peace.

A beautiful example of this kind of healing can be found in the Kirat Limbu tradition, specifically in the "Sām-U:pma Mundhum" practice. The common term for it in Nepali is "Sato bolaune," meaning to call the soul back to life.

Imagine this: A child in the village who has just been playing during the afternoon falls silent and moves away from others. Parents worry. Some believe that the child's sato, or soul, has vanished. It might happen because the child was frightened or just couldn't cope with the situation. So they return to the place where the child had been, gather some leaves, and softly begin to chant "Borom borom… sato aau hai"—calling the soul to come back.

After gathering the fallen leaves, they toss them to the child while using the nicest possible tone and say, "Here, your soul is back." And something shifts. The child lifts their head. Maybe a slight smile returns. The fear eases. The child understands that they are safe and protected.

It looks basic, but to those who do it, this practice passes down many generations of wisdom, caring, and faith in how the soul, body, and group of people are connected.

It is not only an official ceremony but also serves other purposes. It conceals many deep psychological, philosophical, and cultural meanings. We can see this tradition in many places, not just Kirat Limbu. Many cultures across the world practice shamanism in various forms. According to the Sām-Upma Mundhum, different mental illnesses and symptoms show up when there is an imbalance in our life, whether it's with nature, our ancestors, or family members. This happens because our soul is upset by the imbalance.

The book I wrote, titled "Sām- Ūpmā Mundhum, An Indigenous Philosophy of Healing and Anticolonial Thought" incorporates all of these events and studies. The book aims to revive tribal and traditional knowledge that is vanishing globally.

I realized that the end goal of healing is not just about medicine, tests, or scientific terms. It can be seen in cultural practices, in the light murmur of care, and in how they rally around the hurt.

Grief, connection, and hopes are all a part of suicide, so it is a human matter, not just a health issue. With Sām-Upma Mundhum and other indigenous traditions, we are shown that healing doesn't have to be measured or come from something new. It is sometimes found in the stories and ideas passed down through love.

I hope that people who read this book will find it to be not only a source of information but also a way to listen better and respect the wisdom they already possess.

Chapter 11: Conclusion

12.1. Life, soul, and healing in a message.

Sām-Ūpmā: The Circularity of the Mundhum Philosophy is the Kirat Limbu community's traditional cosmology, providing an integrally connected picture of cosmos, self, community, nature, and spirit. This philosophy has three fundamental theories: Śāṁ [one's soul], Ūpmā [soul-calling], and Mudum [oral tradition]. Together, these pillars represent a whole life that is centred on mental, physical, social, and spiritual wellness.

The illusion of what a human being is: A machine denies the fact that each human is more than a body or mind but a complete existence that includes relationships, emotions, memories, and beliefs. When the soul is missing, it takes everything with it, including the brain, society, and spirit. Such rituals as Ūpmā bring healing through the wisdom of Mundhum, community care, and environment.

Philosophy of Mental Health in Mothoism. The Philosophy of the Sām-Ūpmā Mundhum provides a distinctive view on mental health for the present times. It seeks to fill the void from soulless methods in Western health and psychology. Amidst modern alienation, stress, and emotional shutdown, this cosmology exalts soul reconnection, deeper intimacy with life, and regenerative community.

Finally, it lays a cornerstone of maintaining the cultural history of the Kirat Limbu community as a worldwide model of an integrated, operative healing and philosophy for global citizens.

The Sām-Ūpmā Mundhum Philosophy is not merely a cultural story; rather, it is an illuminating philosophy for life deeply rooted in the Kirat paradigm and addressing human concerns. Last, the chapter integrates the content presented throughout the course and explores the philosophical, psychological, and ethical implications of this aboriginal wisdom tradition.

12.2. Recovery of the Soul:

— A Philosophical Psychopathology.

The Sām-Ūpmā Philosophy highlights the relevance of the soul (sām) in healthy human life and questions the disintegration characterized by modern existence. Whereas traditional mental health approaches pathologize symptoms within the brain or body, they argue that much of the pain we experience is often a consequence of spiritual misconnection, social dislocation of communities, and ecological imbalance.

This perspective endorses the importance of soul-based healing—not merely soul in a religious manner, but as an entire philosophy of consciousness and compassion.

12.3. Interlacing Threads of Bonding

Ūpmā ceremonies and mundhum teachings stress that we are one with the ancestors, the land, the community, and the inner self, not only individuals. In Sām-Upma, an ethics of caring from the standpoint of reciprocity, presence, and listening is offered.

In a fragmented world, it reminds us of the wisdom of reweaving what has been torn.

12.4. Decolonial Global Thought

Sām-Ūpmā : In terms of the debate on world philosophies, Sām-Ūpmā stresses the significance of native wisdom. It questions the hegemony of reductionist science and acknowledges oral traditions, spirituality, and community healing as true, vibrant, and visionary.

This is not only a cultural reclaiming; it is a philosophical turn toward multiplicity, humility, and relationality.

12.5. An Invitation to The World

The Sām-Ūpmā Mundhum Philosophy transcends Kirat Limbu indigenous knowledge and wisdom and is open to all scholars, practitioners, and seekers of truth regardless of the land they inhabit.

Listen to chants to know more. - Honour ritual images as sources of knowledge. - Consider healing as restoring to wholeness, a place of belonging and balance, rather than "getting cured."

May a model become a movement.

12.6 Final Reflection

For this book's pilgrimage is also a return to what many have lost sight of: that wisdom can be sung, that healing may be social, and that the soul matters. Sām-Ūpmā is more than a philosophy; it is a lifestyle. This can be our common message: to honour the soul is to restore our humanity.

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Annex-A

Soul-Calling Song

— of the Phedangba/ma, Yeba/ma.

(Calling back the lost soul of the child who vanished on a jungle path in Taplejung)

Hehhh… Listen!
Listen, you—little one of the twilight,
Your soul wandered
While crossing the jungle path last evening.
Wait, child!
I am your Phedangba, the caller of souls,
I come with sacred incense and flowers,
Flowing like the stream that knows your name.

[First Chant-Melody]
Look…!
Tong lang yemba lungna,
Saam Ūpmā lungna…
You vanished in the turn of the trail,
Return, Syawala… come back!
By the witness of the setting sun,
Return, O dreaming soul!

[Second Invocation]
O lost soul!
No bear crossed your path—
but you were afraid.

In the sound of the wind,
you lost your own name.

[Chanted Verse]
Come back, come back, soul of the child,
I carry the sacred drum of the Phedangba.
The Danphe bird that knows your voice
Calls with the river's song to guide you home.

Your footprints remain on the thorny ground,
Like a weeping tree,
O soul!
Now return…
Your mother stirs the rice pot
Remembering you through the fire's warmth.

[Closing Mantra]
He… He… Saam Saam Saam Ūpmā!
Syāma, Syāma!
Bring back the child's breath—
From Taplejung's shadowy trails
To the stream of reunion!
Soul, return…
Soul, return…
Hehh… Hehh… Syamba Saam!

Notes:

- "Saam Ūpmā" is preserved in transliteration as it refers specifically to the soul-calling ritual in Kirat Limbu culture.

- Metaphors like “Danphe bird,” “thorny ground,” and “mother stirring rice” are retained as symbols deeply rooted in Kirati lifestyle and emotion.

- Mantric repetition ("Hehh… Saam… Syāma…") echoes traditional chanting rhythm and sacred breath invocation.

- Tone shifts gently from longing to invocation to commanding hope, matching ritual energy.

Author's Background and Works

Dr. Nawa Raj Subba is a researcher, writer, and thinker moving across disciplinary and cultural boundaries. With a doctorate, he was trained in a rigorous academic environment, but my broader intellectual journey is fueled by an abiding interest in the human condition.

His research focuses on the oral traditions of the Kirat Limbu peoples—particularly the Tungdunge Mundhum—and their intersections with contemporary issues of the time, which include mental health, cultural identity, and social transformation. His work tries to create dialogue by bringing a more subtle and sustained observation of the world, something that has been overlooked, and by reframing it in light of modern frameworks so multiple frames for understandings of well-being and knowledge become possible.

As a writer, he is not only grappling with empirical research but also philosophical reflection, narrative, and cultural analysis. His work addresses scholarly and public audiences and aims to raise questions, prompt reflection, and contribute to conversations about justice, meaning, and human life.

A thinker is an identity that resonates with a lifelong inquiry and synthesis between disciplines of knowledge as well as rendering ideas that stir waters beyond just academic stagnation in an ever-changing global context. He appreciate the importance of critical engagement, having ethical responsibility, and integrated understanding of pluralistic worldviews to face the intricacies of our reality.

His works on Literature, music, and Social Science:

Anthologies of Poems

1. *Jiwan Mero Sabdakoshma,* Anthologu of Poems (2063)
2. *Bich Batoma Byujhera,* Anthologu of Poems (2065)
3. *Yatra Adha Satabdiko,* Anthologu of Poems (2068)
4. *Chitkar* (2069) - Short Poems
5. Life in My Dictionary, Anthologu of Poems (2020)
6. *Jokhanama Vartaman,* Anthologu of Poems (2078)
7. Self-Reflection at the Moment, Anthologu of Poems (2022)
8. *Akash Ra Atma Bichko Samvad,* Khandakavya (2082)
9. Dialogue Between the Sky and the Self, Epic Poem (2025)

Collections of Lyrics

1. *Sahidlai Salam,* Anthologu of Lyrics (2058)
2. *Man Ra Mato,* Anthologu of Lyrics (2073)

Essays

1. *Manko Majheri,* Essays Collection (2064)
2. *Samayako Swad,* Essays Collection (2070)
3. The Mind Canvas, Essays Collection (2021)
4. *Sikkaka Dubai Pata,* Essays Collection (2079)
5. Both Sides of Coins, Essays Collection (2022)

Discography *(Nepali Music Audio/Video Albums)*

1. *Deshko Maya,* Collection of Patriotic songs, 2010
2. *Hami Pahile Nepali*, Collection of Patriotic songs, 2013
3. *Lukeko Rahar*, Collection of Ghazal Album Audio, 2011
4. *Amulya Jiwan,* Collection of Modern songs, 2012
5. *Bahaar Sanga,* Collection of Modern songs, 2016
6. *Himalaima Hiun*, Collection of Folk Songs, 2014

Video Albums *'Pratibimba'* Series-1 to 4.

History and Culture:

1. Tungdunge Mundhum Samiksya (2076)
2. Tungdunge Mundhum Review (2020)
3. Kirat Limbu Sanskriti Manavsastriya Bivechana (2077, 2080)
4. Kirat Limbu Culture, Anthropological Investigation (2023)
5. Tungdunge Mundhum: Kirat Akhyan, Ek Adhyayan (2080)
6. Phyang Samba Bamsawali (2081)
7. The Genealogy of Phyang Samba (2024)
8. The History of the Sen Dynasty of Nepal, 2025
9. Nepalma Sen Jatiko Itihas, 2081
10. Shiva Beyond Borders: The Cross-Cultural Evolution of Proto-Shaivism (2025)
11. Shiva Sima Bhanda Para: Proto-Shaivabadko Viswavyapi Yatra (2082)

Summary of Research Publications

Explorations in Cultural and Linguistic Studies

- Kirat and Limbu Cultural Narratives (GJRHCS, 2022)
- Analyzes the relevance of traditional Kirat-Limbu beliefs in modern cultural identity.

Language Evolution in Nepal (GJRHCS, 2022)

- Critically examines how language shaped ethnic and national identities in Nepal.
- Kirat Ancestry and the Subba Surname (IARJHSS, 2021)
- Explores the sociocultural origin of the 'Subba' title in the Kirat context.
- Complex Identities of Kirat, Rai, and Limbu (IARJHSS, 2021)
- Investigates overlapping and diverging identity frameworks among these groups.

Mythological and Historical Linkages

- Homonyms Bridging Limbu and Dhimal (IARJHSS, 2021)

- Linguistic study of cultural parallels using shared mythical figures like Tungdunge and Dhangdhange.
- Kirat Mythology and Hindu Scriptures (JGLTEP, 2019)
- Connects Lepmuhang Mundhum with Hindu mythology, especially Matsya Purana.
- Sen and Samba Dynasties through Mundhum (IARJHSS, 2022)
- Interprets Kirat oral traditions to trace the historical presence of Sen and Samba clans.

Modern Linguistic Innovations in Kirat Studies

- Evolution of Kirat Languages (IJISRT, 2024)
- Tracks linguistic change from ancient dialects to contemporary usage.
- Kirat Identity Across Time and Space (JETIR, 2023)
- Explores shifts in Kirat ethnic identity through diaspora and historical transition.

Mental Health and Psychology Research

- Mental Health Services and Suicide Prevention in Nepal (Zenodo)
- A narrative review of mental health challenges, policy gaps, and culturally-rooted interventions.
  - [DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.15009292] (https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15009292)